

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Testing for Lead Exposure in Children

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) is working with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services to promote lead testing in children and help families and individuals with lead levels that are higher than recommended limits.

“Anyone can be exposed to lead,” states Melissa Propp, Clinic Manager at SWNPHD. “There are often no obvious symptoms, which makes lead testing very important. Children between the ages of one and five should have a blood lead test. If their lead level is high, a quick survey of your home can help identify the source of the lead exposure.”

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at least 4 million households have children living in them that are being exposed to high levels of lead. Lead-based paint and lead contaminated dust are the most common sources of lead for U.S. children. Lead-based paints were banned for use in housing in 1978; however, houses built before 1978 are likely to contain some lead-based paint. Check for areas of cracking paint that looks like alligator skin, especially around windows, door frames, porches, and around the foundation. Other sources of exposure can be children who have parents who work in galvanizing, building remodeling, or have hobbies like re-loading ammunition or making fishing lures.

Small children are more susceptible to lead exposure because of their tendency to put things in their mouths. “Children develop a taste for lead-based paint because it is sweet, so they will return to areas of exposure,” states Propp. Parents or guardians can reduce this risk by washing their child’s hands before meals, before naps or bedtime, and after playing outdoors.

Families whose children have a lead test that shows a blood lead level higher than 3.5 micrograms per liter will be notified by their healthcare provider and will receive information from SWNPHD, including a letter with the next steps to take. If the lead level is higher than 10, DHHS is available to come do a home inspection to assist in identifying the source of the lead.

For more information including a complete list of potential sources, visit [cdc.gov/lead](https://www.cdc.gov/lead). SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th St (1 block north of Arby’s) in McCook and can be reached by calling 308-345-4223. The website [swhealth.ne.gov](https://www.swhealth.ne.gov) contains many resources and additional information helpful to prevent disease, promote wellness, and protect health. You can also follow SWNPHD on Facebook and Instagram. SWNPHD serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties.

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